



The State of New Hampshire  
*Department of Environmental Services*



Michael P. Nolin  
Commissioner

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**\*\*\*ATTENTION ALL PLUMBING & HEATING CONTRACTORS AND HEATING OIL DEALERS\*\*\***

**NEW HAMPSHIRE SAFETANK UPGRADE AND REPLACEMENT PROGRAM**

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (DES) would like to take this opportunity to once again inform those of you involved with the Safetank program of the progress that has been made to date to prevent releases from residential heating oil tanks and what the future may bring in that effort.

We would like to thank you, our Safetank partners, for the responsible manner in which you have responded to the program's needs from its beginning. Because of your efforts and quality of work, the program has become a successful oil spill prevention tool, potentially saving millions of dollars in cleanup cost and, more importantly, preserving the environment and the state's drinking water resources.

There continues to be a very impressive level of interest and an expanding response to the Safetank program. This can be measured indirectly in how familiar the contractors, oil companies, and general public have become with the program. While a direct measurement can be made by looking at the dramatic increase in the number of applications DES has received. During calendar year 2000, DES received 50 applications. During 2002, that total was up to 287 applications. In 2004, we received 824 applications and that pace continues into 2005.

We would also like to take the opportunity with this correspondence to inform you of a notable change in the program and to briefly review some of the requirements and expectations of the program.

As a little background and review, early in 2000, in an effort to reduce the number of oil releases from substandard residential heating tanks, DES began a state-wide program which sought to work with homeowners to bring their oil tank systems into compliance with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Chapter 31 and DES "Best Management Practices." While residential heating oil tanks are not regulated by DES, it is important to know that compliance with these standards will be a future condition of eligibility to be able to access the New Hampshire petroleum reimbursement cleanup funds should an oil release occur. To facilitate the upgrade effort and to make more upgrades possible, the Safetank program was initiated. For those owners who demonstrated financial need and qualified based on their household income, once approved by DES, they can apply for reimbursement of costs, up to a specific limit, in order to meet the compliance standards.

It is important to reiterate that upgrading or replacing a tank system to these standards is not a mandatory requirement by DES. Rather, it is an incentive effort to have a tank system which is up to date with these standards so that future access to the petroleum reimbursement cleanup funds is possible should an spill or release occur.

**\*\*NOTE\*\* As you know, the limit for Safetank reimbursement since the inception of the program has been \$1,000 per household. Effective August 14, 2005, that limit will be changed to a "not to exceed total" of \$1,500. Additionally, owners may apply for reimbursement of underground storage tank abandonment or removal costs in amounts not to exceed a total of \$2,500. Be advised that the effective date means that the "cost incurred on or after" that date will be eligible for the revised amount.**

DES has always required itemized and detailed estimates as part of the application and approval process along with itemized invoice after the work is completed. That requirement will be enforced as strongly as ever. Failure to provide a properly itemized estimate and/or invoice will result in a delay in the homeowner receiving approval or payment being processed.

In the next few weeks, a revised Safetank application will be available. Please review that new application and discard any old copies or versions you may have.

The following is a reiteration of observations, comments, and clarifications as they relate to the Safetank program in order to assist you in providing a quality product to your customers and to help streamline both the approval and payment processes.

- ✓ Make sure approval is obtained from DES **before** any work is done. Make sure you have a copy of the approval letter for a particular job. If there is any question on the status of an application, please contact DES and the Safetank program directly. **Applications and/or invoices received after the work is done will be rejected.** The homeowner does have the right to appeal the decision if they are denied.
- ✓ As discussed earlier, when **submitting an estimate**, make sure it is itemized. The new application form will have a time and materials checklist. You can utilize this part of the application form or list the applicable information on your own letterhead. Similarly, invoices must also be itemized. Disposal of the old tank is a covered cost and shall be listed if applicable. Incomplete estimates and/or invoices will be returned to you and the homeowner.
- ✓ The **location of outdoor tanks** and pads should be carefully considered. If at all possible, the tank and pad should be located on the gable end of the building to minimize the potential of damage from ice and snow from the roof. If located on a non-gable side, the tank must be at least 18-inches away from the drip line of the eaves or otherwise protected by an adequate roof structure.
- ✓ **Concrete pads** are required to be reinforced and set on a prepared bed of compacted, well-drained material and set fully and solidly on that sub-base. Setting the pad on existing loam or vegetation is **not** acceptable. We remind you that pads are required for the foundation of an indoor tank if a dirt floor is present.
- ✓ The use of **floor flanges** is required in **all** applications. The DES Best Management Practices state that the tank legs shall be equipped with *threaded* floor flanges. The non-threaded, self-centering type of flange is also acceptable.
- ✓ The **use of unprotected filters** in outdoor applications is not permitted. Filters can be the source of a spill caused by damage from ice and snow accumulation during heavy snow years. We will continue to work toward eliminating them being exposed to the weather and potential damage by locating them to a protected area, such as the basement or crawlspace of a building or under a mobile home.
- ✓ The **supply line** (and return line where applicable) is to be the plastic (poly) coated copper variety in most every application. It is required for **all** outdoor installations. When additional protection is needed, such as areas where foot traffic is an issue, the line shall be placed inside a more rigid non-metallic conduit. Bare copper is permitted only for indoor installations where it is not in contact with any concrete or soil. Such an installation may be where the line is run overhead from the tank to the furnace. **DES strongly recommends however**, that plastic-coated line be used in all installations.
- ✓ Be advised that the opening of a **vent line** located more than 5 feet from the fill line connection is considered substandard. If this situation exists, please notify your client and include correcting this deficiency in your estimate. Vent lines must terminate within 5 feet of the fill so that the vent whistle is audible to an oil delivery person.
- ✓ **Invoices** can be forwarded to DES as soon as the work is completed. Invoices must be itemized on the same way estimates are. Advise the owner to forward a copy as soon as possible or provide a copy directly to our office so that we can process it in a timely manner. If the owner has already paid for the work, mark the invoice "paid in full" so that we may reimburse them.
- ✓ We remind you that state regulations and guidelines do not preempt **local authority**. You shall notify the appropriate local officials and comply with any local ordinances and permitting requirements. This includes building permits, notifying the fire department, and any local approvals and inspections.

DES hopes to continue to improve the SAFETANK program and make it an important long-term spill prevention aspect of maintaining the quality of New Hampshire's environment. We encourage any and all comments, both positive and negative, and ask that you contact me at (603) 271-3577 or via email at: [jchwasciak@des.state.nh.us](mailto:jchwasciak@des.state.nh.us) to discuss a particular application or any aspect of the SAFETANK program.

Sincerely,

Jack Chwasciak  
Oil Remediation & Compliance Bureau